

The felt and the playing card

What do Joseph Beuys and Joan Brossa have in common? Apparently, not too much.

Both were seduced by the pathos of the material, the other substance of scientific positivism. Both relocate the art out of the usual scene, cultivate pluridisciplinary. Beuys sublimates, Brossa, deconstructs. Beuys aims to sacralize social relations through communion with nature, dehumanization through animalization. Beuys is the shaman, Brossa the conjuror. Beuys is locked in the gallery-cage and teaches the history of art to a dead hare, without irony, with his face smeared with honey and gold leaf. Brossa is secluded in his apartment on Balmes Street, on a mountain of newspaper clippings, and religiously goes out every evening to his film library session. The alternative pedagogy of Beuys faces the academicism of Brossa.

Joseph Beuys (Kleve, 1921- Dusseldorf, 1986) is one of the greatest German plastic artists. After the Second World War, he began in the art world performing works of monumental sculpture commissioned. Later, he will elaborate a personal and original art that retakes the Dadaist tradition. In 1961 he was appointed professor of Fine Arts at the Düsseldorf Academy and articulated a participatory pedagogical model with his students, very politically engaged.

He also interacted with the international group Fluxus, dedicated especially to the happening, with which he will carry out various actions. From 1969 he will direct his artistic action towards political interaction, outside traditional channels. In fact, his activities can not be ascribed to any specific trend, although he participates in arte povera, Minimal Art and conceptual art. His plastic creations were closely linked to his status as a cultural agitator.

Beuys dresses his art in a tailor-made mythology: during the Second World War, his plane falls down in the Crimea. It is found by a nomadic tribe of Tartars, slathered with animal fat and wrapped in felt. Reborn through this method as effective as symbolic, he abandons his vocation as a pediatrician and moves towards the path of art.

Joan Brossa (Barcelona, 1919-1998) starts his activity after the Spanish Civil War. Mobilized in front of Lérida, he entertains his companions with deck tricks and unusual stories. When the contest ends, he is sent to do military service to Salamanca. There he will discover Freud, the psychic automatism and the hypnagogic images -made through conscious dreams-. Sarria's pastry poet, J. V. Foix, will introduce him to poetic discipline, while Joan Miró - through the latter and patron Joan Prats - will introduce him to psychic automatism and anti-art.

The Brazilian poet and consul in Barcelona, Joao Cabral de Melo, will introduce him to social problems, and the art critic Rafael Santos Torroella - who will occupy

the floor of Cabral in Barcelona - publishes his first great collection of poems: *Em fa fer* Joan Brossa (1950). Finally, his friendship with young painter Antoni Tàpies will lead him to make a series of collaborative artist books, such as *Fregoli* (1969) or *Carrer de Wagner* (1988).

Beuys studies profusely Jung, Leonardo da Vinci and especially James Joyce. De Novalis takes the sentence "everyone is an artist", and Steiner, the more social aspects of natural sciences, such as the behavior of bees. His mind elaborates an animal model, taking up the German mystical tradition, the expressionist spirituality and the Dadaist social utopia. Brossa, meanwhile, makes his first poem object: a piece of patent paper, collected from the garbage and exposed, as is, on a support.

Discover cinema, opera and ballet. He starts in the theater and writes his first scripts. He also collaborates with the group *Dau al Set*, a vanguard movement that links pre-war surrealism with contemporary trends, resorting to the aesthetics of magic, primitivism, automatism and collage. Beuys will guide his career towards political practice, which will deserve him to be expelled as a professor of monumental plastic, through initiatives such as the Organization for a Direct Democracy through the Referendum, the Free International University for creativity and interdisciplinary research, or planted massive of trees. This way of seeing art as the engine of social change and ideological transformation will elevate it as one of the fathers of the new art set in the early sixties.

This, then, is a special opportunity for artistic reflection and dialogue of two of the leading figures of contemporary creativity.

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